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Why branding influences sales

At the end of the day, everyone is selling something, whether it is a multinational corporation selling flat panel TV screens or a non-profit agency trying to recruit volunteers. Success is determined by winning enough customers who want to buy what you have to sell. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is through effective branding. Strong branding communicates a company's vision, message and unique value proposition in a way that compels people to take action. When consumers believe in the products and services you are providing, sales happen.

So, what exactly is brand identity?

Is it a logo? A website? A flyer? Brand identity is the collective perception of a company based on ALL the ways customers and potential customers come into contact with a business or organization. This can include logo design, advertising, collateral material, website, emails, sales presentations, customer service, newspaper articles, phone messages, word-of-mouth messages, trade show booths, employee uniforms—even the sounds and smells that emanate from a business (think Starbucks or Cinnabon). All of these impressions create perceptions that make-up an organization's brand identity.

Creating preferences

Favorable brand identity leads to brand preferences. And brand preferences ultimately lead to an organization's success. "I trust this realtor," "I enjoy lunch at that restaurant," "I think this store offers the best value."

How do you create impressions that lead to preference? Through effective branding that uses words, images and experiences that hit the right nerves with the target audience and lead to thoughts like:

- They understand me and my particular needs
- I feel good about donating money to their cause
- I want to invest in their company
- I want to volunteer for their organization
- They will deliver what they promise

Achieving brand loyalty

Creating preferences over time ultimately leads to brand loyalty and this is where companies can tap into real revenue. Brand loyalty is a powerful tool because it leads not only to repeat business but to highly credible word-of-mouth influences. Brand loyalty manifests thoughts and action such as:

- I will only buy their product/service
- I trust them implicitly
- I know they provide the best value
- They stand for what I believe in

Recruit and retain employees

Just as consumers are affected by brand identity, so are employees and potential employees. The stronger a company's brand image—both internally and externally—the better their ability to recruit and retain the best people. Great workers want to be associated with organizations they feel proud to be a part of. If a company is not reinforcing a strong, appealing brand image they are not leveraging their built-in sales resources—endorsements and support from their own staff.

Branding as an investment not an expense

While many companies don't think twice about purchasing a new piece of equipment or investing in technology, they often perceive brand development as an expense instead of an investment. The truth is, the real lifeblood of all business is sales and the best way to ensure a company's long-term success is to connect with customers in ways that cultivate future sales. With that in mind, investing in branding may be one of the best investments a company will ever make towards increasing its bottom line.

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